

Public Affairs Office
*Embassy
of the United States
of America, Bern*



The Role of Arts in International Understanding



These pieces [The Capitol Building and George Washington Monument] reflect my impression of what these two great monuments stand for, a place for all people who come to America, representing freedom and equality. I used reds and blues in my palette to refer to the image American flag, and combined that with detailed patterns to represent the people and cultures of other lands.

The Capitol Building , 1993-1994

Gouache on board

Collection of Earl Glock and Jack O'Connell Associates

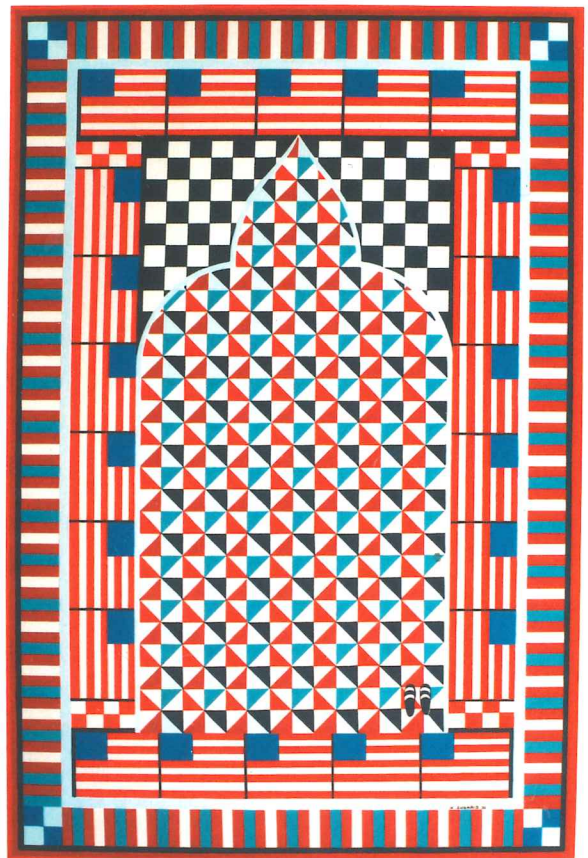
This piece was created directly after 9/11. In the aftermath of that tragedy, I felt as if we needed to be brought together in mutual understanding and open dialogue.

The abstracted image of the American flag combined with an Islamic prayer rug, serve to help unify people in empathy and compassion.

Prayer Rug for America, 2001

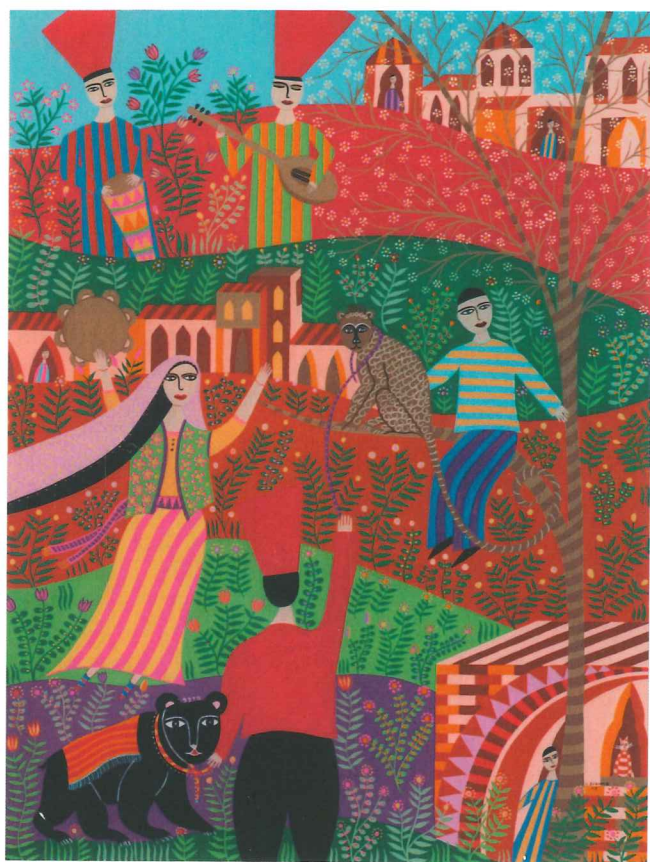
Gouache on board

Collection of the Library of Congress



This is a painting from the series I created called "Stories My Father Told Me." These are paintings based on my father's true stories of growing up in Syria and Lebanon. This story is about how my father got fresh milk in Damascus. A shepherd would bring his special milking goats to each home and fill the milk buckets according to the needs of the house. My father fondly remembers petting the goats before going off to school.

The Hallab, 2008
Gouache on board
Collection of Marcia Stanford



From "Stories My Father Told Me," a story about the peddler who would come into town with his dancing bear and monkey and also he had gypsies who would sing and dance in colorful costumes. Of course all this would have cost my father a few piasters in change to see the performance.

Gypsies and Dancing Bear, 2007
Gouache on board
Private Collection

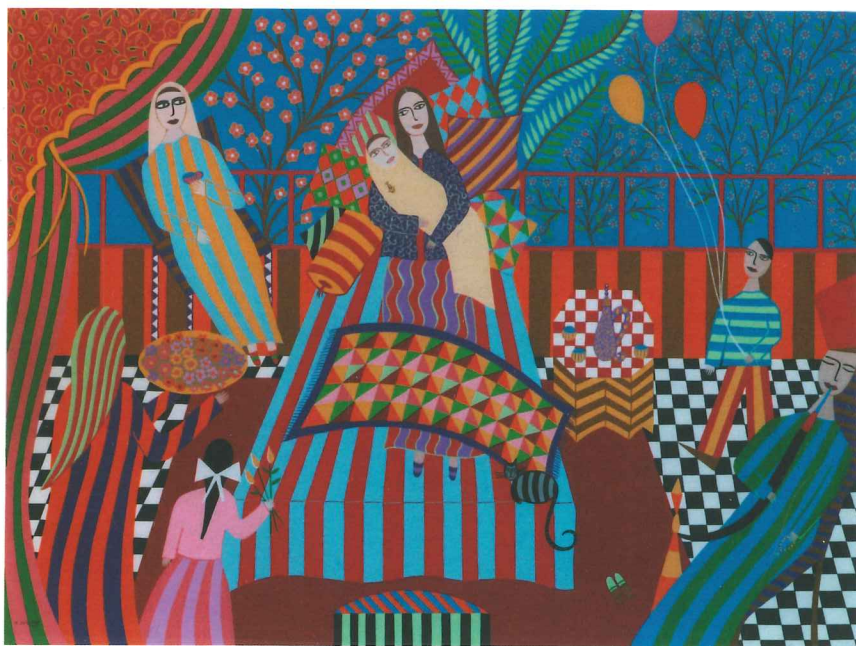
This piece is part of a series of paintings I have created to show the strength and beauty and resilience of women in the face of adversity and hardships.

Sisters Too, 2004
Gouache on board
Collection of Dominique Lallement



From "Stories My Father Told Me," a story about the traditions in a village when a child is born. After the midwife is gone, the father will place a piece of jewelry on his wife's pillow and a few gold coins in the baby's crib. The wife will stay in bed for forty days receiving well-wishers. Special food is prepared and given to all the guests who come to pay their respects.

Birth of a Baby, 2007
Gouache on board
Collection of Jessica Wright and Dan Roberts





"Midnight Prayers," is my impression of the Call to Prayer one hears in the Middle East, where I grew up. The beauty of the call to prayer combined with the rich detail of intricate Islamic designs in blues and greens, symbolize the beauty and lushness of the Arab world.

Midnight Prayers, 2006

Giclée archival print, 14/20

Collection of Prime Minister Maliki

Presented by President Barak Obama to Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki during a July 2009 White House visit.

Helen Zughaib

Helen Zughaib is an Arab-American born in Beirut. She lived in the Middle East and Europe before returning to the United States to study art. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts. She paints using gouache and ink on board, transforming her subjects into a combination of colors and patterns, creating a nontraditional sense of space and perspective.

Helen has exhibited widely in New York and the Washington metro area. Her paintings are included in over 80 private and public collections, including the White House, World Bank, Library of Congress, US Consulate General, Vancouver, Canada; American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, and the Arab American National Museum in Detroit, Michigan. She served as United States Cultural Envoy to the West Bank, Palestine. Most recently, President Obama gave one of Zughaib's pieces to Prime Minister Maliki upon his official visit to the White House in July.

Zughaib feels that her background in the Middle East allows her to approach the experiences she has in America, in a unique way, remaining an observer of both the Arab and American cultures. She believes that the arts are one of the most important tools we have to help shape and foster dialogue and positive ideas about the Middle East.

Hopefulness, healing and spirituality, are all themes that are woven into her work.